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(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PROVIDING ON THE FLY CUSTOMIZED WEB PAGES
 (54) Titre: PROCEDE ET APPAREIL DE CREATION A LA VOLEE DE PAGES WEB PERSONNALISEES

(57) Abstract

A method and system implemented through software executed on a server computer for creating a customized web site in response to a user's click on a hypertext link. Template software components are stored on a web merchant's web server for creating a web site in accordance with specific content and functionality determined by a partner of the web merchant. A database stores a web content profile defined by the partner and identifiable with a partner identifier (52). The partner provides special hypertext links accessible to users for activating the template software components. Upon clicking the special hypertext link, the partner identifier is transmitted to the web merchant's web server where it is used to call up the partner profile (53). The template web server components construct a customized web site in accordance with the profile stored in the database that corresponds to the partner identifier (54). The customized web site is downloaded to the user's web browser where it remains available for the duration of a defined session (55). No copy of the customized web site is stored on any web server. Accordingly, other than any temp files created by the user's operating system or web site images maintained by the user's browser, upon session completion, the customized web site is lost.

(57) Abrégé

L'invention se rapporte à un procédé et à un système mis en oeuvre de manière logicielle sur un ordinateur serveur aux fins de création d'un site web personnalisé en réponse à un clic de l'utilisateur sur un lien hypertexte. Des composants logiciels modèles sont stockés sur un serveur web de commerçant du web en vue de la création d'un site web conformément à un contenu spécifique et à une fonctionnalité déterminée par un partenaire du commerçant du web. Une base de données permet le stockage d'un profil de contenu web défini par le partenaire et identifiable à l'aide d'un identificateur de partenaire (52). Le partenaire fournit des liens hypertexte accessibles par les utilisateurs aux fins d'activation des composants logiciels des modèles. Lorsque le clic est effectué sur le lien hypertexte spécial, l'identificateur de partenaire est transmis au serveur web du commerçant du web, où il est utilisé pour appeler le profil du partenaire (53). Les composants du serveur web modèle construisent un site web personnalisé conformément au profil stocké dans la base de données qui correspond à l'identificateur de partenaire (54). Aucune copie du site web personnalisé n'est stockée sur aucun serveur web. Par conséquent, lorsque la session se termine, le site web personnalisé est perdu, à l'exception de tout fichier temporaire créé par le système d'exploitation de l'utilisateur ou des images de sites web mises à jour par l'explorateur de l'utilisateur.

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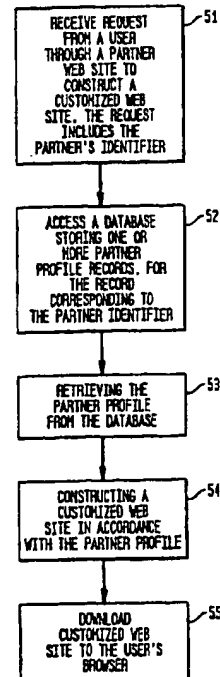
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(57) Abstract

A method and system implemented through software executed on a server computer for creating a customized web site in response to a user's click on a hypertext link. Template software components are stored on a web merchant's web server for creating a web site in accordance with specific content and functionality determined by a partner of the web merchant. A database stores a web content profile defined by the partner and identifiable with a partner identifier (52). The partner provides special hypertext links accessible to users for activating the template software components. Upon clicking the special hypertext link, the partner identifier is transmitted to the web merchant's web server where it is used to call up the partner profile (53). The template web server components construct a customized web site in accordance with the profile stored in the database that corresponds to the partner identifier (54). The customized web site is downloaded to the user's web browser where it remains available for the duration of a defined session (55). No copy of the customized web site is stored on any web server. Accordingly, other than any temp files created by the user's operating system or web site images maintained by the user's browser, upon session completion, the customized web site is lost.



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Description

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5 **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PROVIDING**
 ON THE FLY CUSTOMIZED WEB PAGES

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15 **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

 This invention relates generally to the field of e-commerce and to methods and computer systems to enable a first web merchant, referred to herein as a partner, to provide a customer with product or services that are only available through a second web merchant. Furthermore, the method and system of the present invention provide a means for a web merchant to market and sell its products and services through a strategic partner. More specifically, the present invention allows for the creation of a customized web site in a real time response to a customer's click on a partner's hypertext link, through which those products and services may be provided to the customer as though originating from the partner.

30

35 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

 The world wide web ("www" or the web") comprises servers on the Internet running software in the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). HTTP provides users with text, graphics, images, sound, video, Hypertext Markup Language—"HTML" etc., as well as programs). HTML is a standard page description language which provides basic document formatting and allows the developer to specify links to other servers and files. Links are specified via a URL. Upon specification of a link, the client makes a TCP/IP request to the server and receives information that was specified in that URL (for example another "Web page" that was formatted according to HTML) in return. The information that is returned

5 may be generated in whole or in part by a program that executes on the server. Such
programs are typically known as CGI (Common-Gateway Interface) scripts and can be
written using known programming languages. A typical Web page is an HTML document
10 with text, links that a user may activate (e.g. 'click on'), as well as embedded URLs pointing
to resources (such as images, video or sound) that the client must fetch to fully render the
Web Page in a browser. These resources may not be located on the same server that held the
15 HTML document. Furthermore, HTTP allows for the transmission of certain information
from the client to a server. This information can be embedded within the URL, can be
contained in the HTTP header fields, or can be posted directly to the server using known
20 HTTP methods.

Pages on the web have become a significant interface for merchants and other
25 purveyors of information to provide access to information, market products and services,
communicate with computer clients and transact business. The www owes its success to two
main features: the availability of software browsers allows clients to access information made
30 available on web pages without concern about proprietary features of the client computer
hardware. The other major feature is the method for linking web pages, which allows the
client to access related web pages in a logical progression. In particular, the most popular
35 form of linking is implemented by hypertext links, which provide highlighted regions of a
web page that represent links to other web pages. By clicking a mouse cursor on a hypertext
link the user replaces the current web page with the web page associated with the link. Web
40 pages exist as software executing on web servers. To access a web page, a user directs
his/her browser to access the particular server, which is identified by a universal resource
locator ("URL").

45 The Internet has become an extremely popular advertising tool. In addition to
companies having their own Internet Web sites, many purchase advertising space on popular
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5 web sites of other companies. By purchasing banner space ("ad banner") on a popular site,
the advertiser can attract potential customers who visit the popular site. The user viewing the
ad banner can access the advertiser's site simply by clicking the ad banner, which contains a
10 link to the advertiser's web site.

Generally, an ad banner is embedded inside a feature web page located on a first
server via an HTML tag. When a user's computer transmits a TCP/IP request for the
15 feature Web page to the first server, the Web page is downloaded to the client, including the
embedded ad banner identified by the tag. The tag references the ad banner,
which typically resides as software on an ad server. The ad server returns an advertisement
20 image to the user for display within the feature web page. Often, by clicking on the ad
banner, the user downloads a resource from the ad server, which forwards the user to a page
on the advertiser's web site.

25 One recognized limitation of ad banners to attract customers from other web pages, is
the reluctance of visitors to the feature web site to leave that site and follow an unspecified
number of links. Many users, especially those less familiar with the Internet and computers
30 generally may fear they will be unable to retrace their steps to the feature web page.

Hypertext links are also used by web merchants to offer their customers products and
35 services available through other vendors, which they themselves do not otherwise provide. It
is commonly believed that by providing a web site rich in content, a web merchant is better
able to attract, as well as retain customers. Thus hypertext links are an easy way for a web
40 merchant to enrich the environment of their web site by providing customers with easy access
to additional products services and information in general, that they do not directly provide.

This use of hypertext links has its limitations and is potentially counter productive.
45 First, a user that clicks on a link to visit another merchant's web page may never return. Thus
while the link is intended to attract customer's to the feature site with additional services, it

5 may have the opposite effect of distracting and diverting customers away. Second, while
providing additional services to a visitor of one's web site may provide a richer environment,
the customer that clicks on the link and visits the advertised site, knows that the goods and
10 services they are viewing on the second site do not belong to the first web merchant. Thus
the first web merchant has lost an opportunity for enhancing their own goodwill and brand
recognition.

15 Similarly, there is no known effective manner for a first web merchant to strategically
align with a second web merchant to provide the second web merchant's products and
services through the second web merchant's infrastructure, under the first web merchant's
20 brand. Conversely, the second web merchant may want to make their products and services
available from a variety of other popular web merchant sites ("strategic partners"),
customized for that particular merchant. Where the number of such partners is significant, it
25 becomes burdensome for the second web merchant to maintain a correspondingly significant
number of active sites to maintain the constant availability of the customized web content for
all of its strategic partners.
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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

35 The present invention comprises a method and system implemented through software
executed on a server computer for creating a customized web site in response to a user's click
on a hypertext link. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention template software
40 components are stored on a web merchant's web server for creating a web site in accordance
with specific content and functionality determined by a partner of the web merchant. A
database stores a web content profile defined by the partner and identifiable with a partner
45 identifier. The partner provides special hypertext links accessible to users for activating the
template software components. Upon clicking the special hypertext link, the partner
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5 identifier is transmitted to the web merchant's web server where it is used to call up the
partner profile. The template web server components construct a customized web site in
accordance with the profile stored in the database that corresponds to the partner identifier.
10 The customized web site is downloaded to the user's web browser where it remains available
for the duration of a defined session. No copy of the customized web site is stored on any
web server. Accordingly, other than any temp files created by the user's operating system or
15 web site images maintained by the user's browser, upon session completion, the customized
web site is lost.

20 Accordingly, use of the present invention provides advantages to the web merchant as
well as to the strategic partner. The web merchant is able to expand its customer base
through strategic partners. Moreover, the web merchant is able to provide web sites,
individually customized for numerous strategic partners, without having to store and maintain
25 multiple web sites.

The strategic partner benefits with the ability to provide added content, products
30 and/or services, for which it requires the web merchant, yet in an environment dictated by the
strategic partner. For example, the present invention may be utilized by a strategic partner
who would like to provide a service or product to a customer that is only available through a
web merchant, such as an opportunity to purchase a customized music compact disc ("CD"),
35 where the strategic partner does not itself provide such a service.

40 Furthermore, this content, products and/or services may be provided under the
strategic partner's brand. This allows the strategic partner to (i) capitalize on increased
goodwill resulting from providing the additional content products and/or services; (ii)
eliminate the risk of a potential customer following the hypertext link to the web merchant's
45 web site and not returning to the strategic partner's web site; and (iii) increase the chance that
a visitor to its site will click on the hypertext link, by reducing the fear of some user's that

5 they will not be able to find their way back to the strategic partner's web site.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 Figure 1 is a system architecture drawing of the system of the present invention.

Figure 2 is a table listing various controllable features of the layout of the customized web site in accordance with the present invention.

15 Figure 3 is a table listing various controllable functionalities of the customized web site in accordance with the present invention.

20 Figure 4 is a table listing various controllable features of the content of the customized web site in accordance with the present invention.

25 Figure 5 is a flow chart of the steps of one embodiment of the method of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

30 Referring to Figure 1 the system of the present invention involves the interaction of a user's computer 10 and a web merchant's computer system 20. User computer 10 must include a web enabled browser 11. In a preferred embodiment the browser 11 will be able to support HTML version 3.0 or greater. At the time of the filing of the present application
35 commercially available browsers supporting the present invention include Microsoft's Internet Explorer version 3.0 or greater, or Netscape Navigator 3.0 or greater. Web merchant
40 computer system 20 comprises a web server running various software components for creating customized web pages on the fly, as well as a database 28, storing one or more records 30 of partner profiles, as described in more detail below. The software components
45 include an active server pages program 15 and one or more of the following software template components: a presentation component 22, a shopping component 24 and a content

component 26.

5 In operation, a user accesses a page on a partner web site using browser 11. By
activation of a link, either as a result of initially selecting the partner web site, or by clicking
10 on a hypertext link, the user indicates an interest in a product or service, which the partner is
offering through a strategic partnership with a web merchant. The link includes an embedded
uniform resource locator directing it to web merchant's computer system 20. Specifically,
15 the URL directs the user to the web merchant's computer system 20. The link also includes a
partner identifier 12. Upon linking to web merchant's computer system 20, the Active Server
Pages 15 program is initiated. As an initial step web merchant computer system 20 uses the
20 partner identifier 12 to look up a partner profile record 30 from database 28. Individual
partner profiles are stored in database 28 for each strategic partner with whom the web
merchant establishes a strategic partnership for providing the web merchant's goods and/or
25 services under the partner's brand.

The partner profile associated with partner identifier 12 is retrieved and the web
30 merchant's computer system 20 constructs a customized web site using Active Server Pages
15. The customized web site is constructed with a layout, content and functionality using
software components 22, 24 and 26 and in accordance with the specification embedded in the
35 partner profile record 30. The customized web site 14 is then downloaded to the user's
browser 11.

40 In accordance with the present invention it is not necessary to save a copy of the web
site on any web server, since it is constructed on the fly in response to the user's click of the
hypertext link, mentioned above. Thus the customized web site may exist only on the user's
browser. Accordingly, where the web site is accessed for a shopping session, it may cease to
45 exist as soon as the shopping session is complete. In any event the web site may cease to
exist as soon as the user follows a link to another location, or otherwise closes the active

5 window of his browser 11.

Information concerning the activity of the user may be transmitted to either the partner or the web merchant for later statistical analysis.

10 In one preferred embodiment, and as an example of the utility of the present invention, the system of the present invention may be used by a partner to provide its customers with the ability to create customized compact discs. It will become apparent to those skilled in the art that the present invention may be employed in order to provide any number of services or goods. The use of customized compact discs is but an example of one known embodiment.

20 This partner will typically not have the infrastructure, nor otherwise be engaged in the business of constructing compact discs. Rather, the partner may wish to include this service to its customers as an added value of shopping, or otherwise visiting its web site. The partner may wish to provide the service on a temporary basis as part of a promotion, or as a seasonal, or holiday special. This partner may wish to establish a strategic partnership with a web merchant that has the infrastructure to provide a customized web service over the Internet.

30 Similarly, a web merchant may desire for any number of reasons to provide its service through a strategic partner. For example, a strategic partnership enables the web merchant to increase its exposure without incurring advertising costs. Second, the web merchant is able to reach markets that it does not normally target. Third, the use of the system of the present invention provides access to many customers that would otherwise not click on advertising banners that appear on many web sites. Many customers do not click on advertising banners out of fear that they will not find their way back to the original web site they were visiting. However, their fear is reduced where the web merchant's advertising banner is replaced with a hypertext link to create a customized disc. This link appears to the user as if they are merely moving to another page of the same site they are currently visiting.

5 The present invention facilitates the foregoing interests of the partner and the web
merchant by allowing for multiple customized web sites for multiple strategic partners
without the attendant costs of web site design, storage and maintenance. This is made
10 possible by the interaction of the software components 22, 24 and 26 on the web merchant's
computer system 20 and the partner profiles. The software components execute a set of
instructions to create any number of web sites with a variety of available features, including
15 layout, functionality and content as specified in more detail below. The partner profile
dictates the specific look and feel functionality and content from the available choices that a
customized web site accessed from their link will have. In this manner it is not necessary to
20 store and maintain multiple web sites, many of which may only be temporary. All
customized web sites are created on the fly in response to a user following a link from a
partner's web site. These customized web sites then exist on the user's browser 11 only until
25 the user leaves the web site.

While a variety of software components may be used to construct the customized web
30 sites of the present invention, in one preferred embodiment of the present invention all
customized web sites are constructed with a layout set by layout component 22; a shopping
functionality proscribed by shopping component 24; and certain content proscribed by
35 content component 26. Referring to Figures 2-4, a list of controllable items for each of the
three software components 22, 24 and 26, respectively, are shown.

Thus for example a partner may desire to provide the user with a customized web site
40 having a specific look and fee. For example, the look and feel may resemble a set of well
known colors and fonts that a user may associate as originating from the partner.
Background graphics may be selected to correspond to the season or holiday for which the
45 customized compact disc service is being promoted. Similarly, the partner may desire a
specific navigation bar, theme or margin settings to provide a specific look and feel to the
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5 customized web page. Alternatively, a partner may seek less control over the layout and may
even wish to select from one or more basic layout templates provided by the web merchant.
This is shown as Basic Layout 1 and Basic Layout 2.

10 Referring to Figure 3, various functionalities may be associated with the customized
web site, some of which are shown by example. The price model may be used to dictate cost
structure for the services which the web merchant will make available to the user through the
15 customized web site. As stated on Figure 3, the selection constraints may dictate the number
of songs that a user may purchase. The partner may also wish to provide the user with
shipping options such as overnight, ground, air etc. Similarly, providing gift options may be
20 desirable as well. Thus a partner may be able to dictate whether wrapping will be made
available to the user. If wrapping is made available the partner may be able to select whether
the user will only be provided with basic wrapping, a variety of wrappings to select from and
25 whether the wrapping will be free of charge to the user. In addition, the user may be
provided with the ability to select a card and to scribe a message on the card. Certainly many
30 other options are possible and within the scope of the present invention.

The personalization option if elected by the partner may allow a title for the
customized compact disc to be created by the partner or even by each user. Similarly,
35 partners may want to include specific cover art on the compact disc, or allow a user to add
their own cover art.

40 Other functionalities that may be made available to a partner include whether current
promotions and discounts made available to the web merchant's direct customers should pass
through to the users of the customized web site. In addition, partners can elect to include on
the customized web site accessed through their own web site, ad banners from services to
45 which they subscribe, such as Double Click and Flycast.

Referring to Figure 4, the content component 26 allows a partner to dictate the portion

5 of the web merchant's library that will be made available to a user of a customized web site including the media that will be made available to the user, such as audio, video, or both. In addition, the partner may chose to allow users to burn their own compact discs, or to simply receive downloads of their selection.

10 It should be apparent that the list of features and functionalities shown in Figures 2-4 are not exhaustive, but merely illustrative. Many other options and variations may be obvious to those skilled in the relevant art. Furthermore, while described in the context of a preferred embodiment of the present invention wherein customized compact discs are the goods and services made available through the customized web site, the present invention is not so limited. It will be obvious from the description of the present invention contained herein to tailor the list of features functionality and content to suit the product and/or services to be made available through the customized web sites.

25 Turning now to the interplay between the software components and the partner profiles, partner profile records 30 are necessary first to identify authorization for access to web merchant's computer system 20 to construct a customized web site in accordance with the present invention. Furthermore, partner profile records 30 are used to proscribe the level of control that the strategic partner has over the layout, content and functionality of the customized web site, as well as the specific customizations to be used for each partner.

35 In one preferred embodiment of the present invention multiple partnership relationships may be established, each of which provides a different degree of control to the partner on the layout, content and functionality. The highest level of control is Superstore. This provides a partner with complete control over the layout, functionality and content of the customized web site. For example, the partner may be able to control all of the options identified above in connection with the discussion on Figures 2-4.

45 In addition, with full flexibility, a partner may assign different web sites, featuring

5 different functionalities to different users. This may be accomplished by having the partner
profile records 30 contain fields that determine parameters that control access to the range of
choices. These parameters may also include security passwords to allow different levels of
10 access by different users.

The second level is referred to as Partner. This level allows a strategic partner to
chose from a variety of basic templates made available by the web merchant. Each template
15 may be distinguished by a variety of features including colors, fonts and background
graphics.

Express is the third level of partnership in which the partner selects from basic
20 templates made available by the web merchant. The partner has less control over the look
and feel of the customized web site than available at the Superstore or Partner level.
Furthermore, a more limited library is made available to the user than may be available to the
25 user accessing a customized web site through a partner at one of the higher levels of
partnership. This level may be effective and economical for partners seeking a temporary
strategic partnership to provide the service during a holiday, or other season.
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A final level is referred to as Affiliate. A partner at this level may not change any
element of the customized web site, nor do they have any control over price setting.
35 Furthermore, the users will not have access to any of the web merchant's promotions or
discounts.

Referring back to the example of the customized music CD, the partner may want to
40 provide a hypertext link containing an advertisement inviting a customer to purchase a
customized music CD. However, the partner would prefer that the web site on which the
customer would purchase the customized music CD should preferably relate to the partner's
45 web site in theme, content, special interest, etc. However, to construct a web site to reside on
a web server for this specific narrow and perhaps transient purpose is not economical. The
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5 system of the present invention however, as described above provides architecture for the
web merchant to provide its service to many partners without any partner having to construct
a special web site.

10 The method of the present invention is now described with reference to Figure 5.
Referring to block 51, the web merchant receives a request from a user to construct a
customized web site. The request originates from a partner's web site and includes the
partner's identifier. In block 52, the web merchant accesses a database using the partner's
15 identifier, to retrieve the partner's profile and retrieves it in block 53. Using the partner's
profile, the web merchant constructs the customized web site, in block 54 and thereafter
20 downloads it to the user, in block 55.

The foregoing description merely illustrates certain specific embodiments of the
25 present invention and is not intended to exclude other embodiments, which fall within the
spirit and scope of the present invention.

Claims

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for a web merchant to construct a web site individually customized for each of at least one strategic partners of said merchant, said method comprising the steps of:
- receiving a request from a user through said user's web browser to link to a web site, said request originating from a web site of one of said strategic partners of said web merchant and comprising identifier data corresponding to said strategic partner;
 - accessing a database storing a partner profile of each of said at least one strategic partners, each of said profiles containing a specification of at least one desired attribute of a customized web site;
 - retrieving said partner profile of said strategic partner from whose web site said request originated;
 - constructing a web page with said at least one attribute specified in said profile of said strategic partner; and
 - downloading said constructed web site to said user.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said constructing step further comprises the steps of:
- providing said customized web site with a look and feel specified by said partner profile of said strategic partner;
 - providing a selection of products and services available through said customized web site;
 - providing user input means for identifying from said selection, goods and services to be purchased;
 - providing user input means for specifying delivery data for delivering said purchased goods and services; and
 - providing user input means for specifying payment data for paying for said purchased goods and services.

- 5 1 3. A method for forming a strategic partnership between a strategic partner and a web
2 merchant to provide products and services of said web merchant through a web site
3 customized for said strategic partner, said method comprising the steps of:
- 10 4 providing a hypertext link from a web site of said strategic partner to a web
5 server of said web merchant, said hypertext link comprising identifier data of said
6 strategic partner;
- 15 7 receiving said strategic partner identifier data as a result of a user clicking on
8 said hypertext link through a web browser;
- 20 9 using said strategic partner identifier data to access a database storing a profile
10 of said strategic partner, said profile containing a specification of at least one desired
11 attribute of a customized web site;
- 25 12 retrieving said profile of said strategic partner;
- 13 constructing a web page with said at least one attribute specified in said profile
14 of said strategic partner;
- 30 15 downloading said constructed web site to said user; and
16 providing said products and services of said web merchant to said user through
17 said customized web site.
- 35 18 4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of defining said profile of said
19 strategic partner.
- 40 20 5. The method of claim 4 wherein said defining step further comprises the step of
21 defining the layout of said customized web site.
- 22 6. The method of claim 4 wherein said defining step further comprises the step of
23 defining a customer profile.
- 45 24 7. The method of claim 4 wherein said defining step further comprises the step of
25 defining the content to be available to a user through said customized web site.

- 5 1 8. A method for doing business on the Internet by providing products and services of a
2 web merchant through a customized web site, said method comprising the steps of:
3 receiving a request from a user through said user's web browser to link to a
10 4 web site, said request originating from a web site of one of said strategic partners of
5 said web merchant and comprising identifier data corresponding to said strategic
6 partner;
15 7 accessing a database storing a partner profile of each of said at least one
8 strategic partners, each of said profiles containing a specification of at least one
9 desired attribute of a customized web site;
20 10 retrieving said partner profile of said strategic partner from whose web site
11 said request originated;
12 constructing a web page with said at least one attribute specified in said profile
25 13 of said strategic partner;
14 downloading said constructed web site to said user;
15 receiving ordering data from said user through said customized web site;
30 16 assembling said order for said user;
17 packaging said assembled order for said user; and
35 18 shipping said packaged order to a shipping address specified by said user.
- 19 9. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of providing a hypertext link to
20 link to a designated web server of said web merchant for receiving said request from said user
40 21 for a customized web site, said hypertext link comprising an address of said designated web
22 server and said identifier data of said strategic partner.
- 23 10. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of defining a profile comprising of
45 24 a plurality of desired attributes of a web site, said plurality of attributes comprising:
25 a desired look and feel of said customized web site;

5 1 a customer profile of the users expected to request a customized web site;
2 a price model for goods and services ordered through said customized web
3 site;
10 4 a selection constraint delimiting the goods and services to be made available to
5 a user requesting a customized web site;
6 a selection of shipment options to made available to a user for delivery of
15 7 goods and services ordered through said customized web site;
8 a selection of gift options to be made available to said user; and
9 a personalization option for a user to personalize the goods and services
20 10 ordered through said customized web site.
11 11. The method of claim 10 wherein said look and feel attribute directs the use of a
25 12 standard look and feel for said customized web site during said constructing step, said
13 standard look and feel made available by said web merchant.
14 12. The method of claim 10 wherein said look and feel attribute directs the use of a look
30 15 and feel for said customized web site during said constructing step which is specified by said
16 strategic partner.

FIG. 1

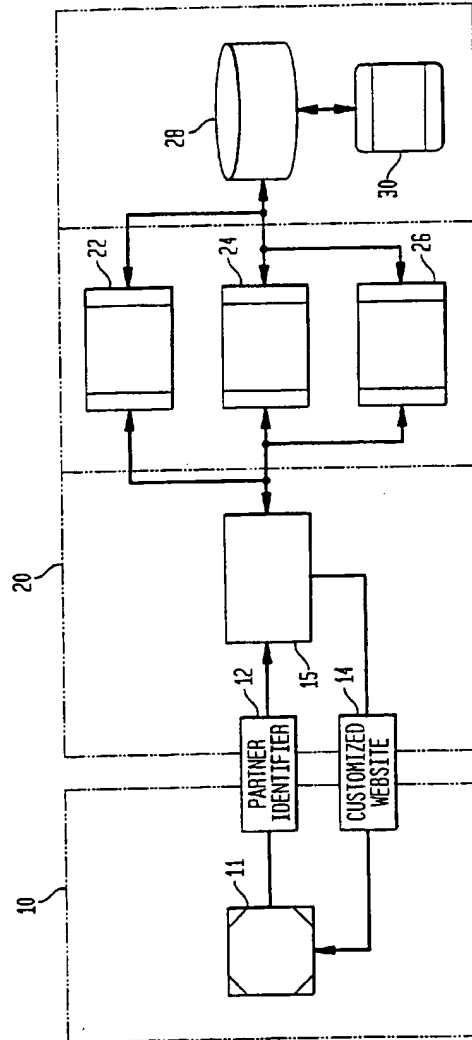


FIG. 2

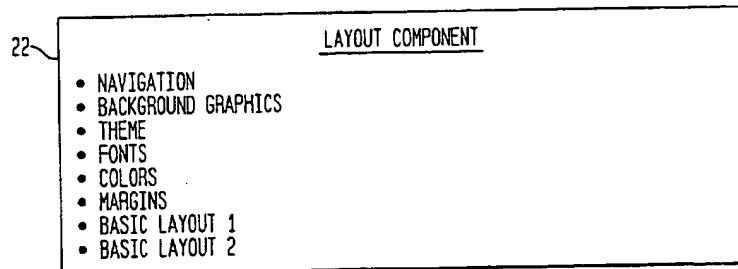


FIG. 3

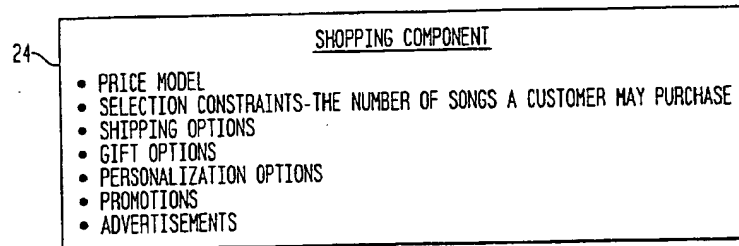
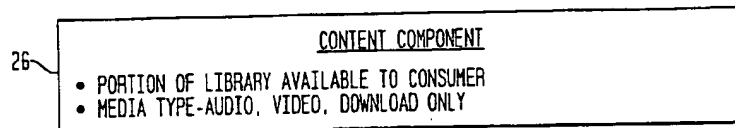
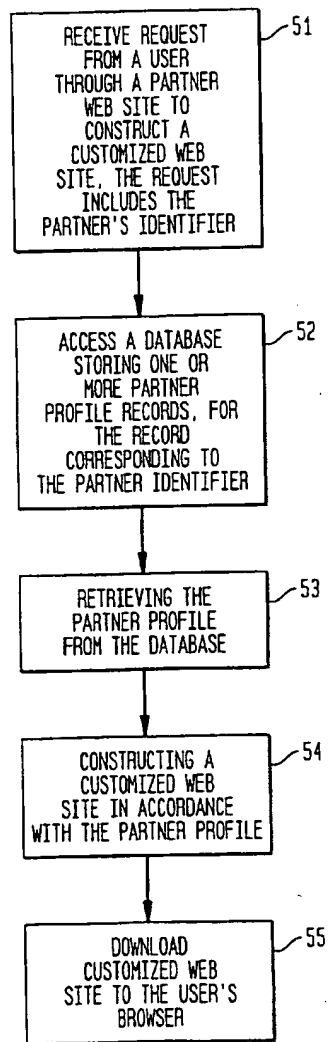


FIG. 4



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FIG. 5



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/02128

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G06F 7/00

US CL : 707/501, 513, 530; 705/14, 26, 27

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 707/501, 513, 530; 705/14, 26, 27

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WEST, DIALOG

search terms: online, internet, comparison, shopping, storefront.

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	Karpinski, R. "Interconnected Storefronts Weave A Merchandising Web", InternetWeek, pS14, April, 1998, pages 1-5, especially pages 1, and 4.	1-12NON
X	Indermaur, K., "At Your Service? (electronic commerce agent technology)", DBMS, v11, n10, p31(1), September 1998, text pages 1-7, especially page 4	1-12
A	Vogelstein et al., "Click 'til you drop. (Internet Shopping)", U.S. News & World Report, 42(1), December 1, 1998, text pages 1-5.	1-12



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

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O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

T

later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

X

document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

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document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

A

document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

08 MARCH 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/02128

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	"Hello Direct Announces Two New Internet Marketing Alliances", PR Newswire, p903CGTH036, September 3, 1998, text pages 1-2	1-12